

A CULTURAL RESOURCES SURVEY OF THE SITE OF THE PROPOSED
HENDERSON LAND COMPANY SECTION 4 COMMERCIAL SITE IN
CENTRAL WALKER COUNTY, TEXAS

By

William E. Moore

Brazos Valley Research Associates

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HENDERSON LAND COMPANY SECTION 4 COMMERCIAL SITE IN CENTRAL
WALKER COUNTY, TEXAS

Brazos Valley Research Associates

Project Number 02-07

Principal Investigator

William E. Moore

Prepared for

Gerald B. Harris, Jr. and Associates, Inc.
Post Office Box 1446
Huntsville, Texas 77340

Prepared by

Brazos Valley Research Associates
813 Beck Street
Bryan, Texas 77803

ABSTRACT

Brazos Valley Research Associates (BVRA) conducted a cultural resources survey of a 22 acre tract in the city limits of Huntsville, Texas in April of 2002 at the site of a proposed subdivision on private property to be leased by the Texas Department of Corrections (TDC). This work was performed under the supervision of William E. Moore and was sponsored by the engineering firm Gerald B. Harris, Jr. and Associates, Inc. of Huntsville, Texas. Shovel testing and surface inspection of disturbed areas did not reveal evidence of a prehistoric site. Courthouse research conducted as part of a separate environmental assessment indicated that no standing structures were ever present in the project area. Therefore, it is recommended that construction be allowed to proceed as planned.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank everyone whose cooperation made the completion of this project possible, especially Gerald B. Harris, Jr. who provided maps and other information regarding the project area. The fieldwork was conducted with the assistance of James E. Warren and Christine Brennecke. The figures that appear in this report were drafted by Lili Lyddon. Adrianne Mraz, Research Assistant at the Texas Archeological Research Laboratory (TARL) in Austin, Texas, performed the literature search.

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INTRODUCTION

The TDC intends to lease a 22 acre tract in the city limits of Huntsville in central Walker County, Texas (Figure 1). Prior to this, certain modifications to the landscape are planned for development of a commercial site and include streets, sewers, water mains, drainage system, parking lots, and buildings. This development is referred to as the Henderson Land Company Section 4, sections 1-3 having already been completed. At the request of the engineering firm Gerald B. Harris, Jr. and Associates, Inc. in Huntsville, Texas, Brazos Valley Research Associates (BVRA) conducted a Phase I cultural resources assessment of the tract on April 22, 2002. Since the project area is in close proximity to Parker Creek to the northwest, a major stream in the area, an archaeological survey was warranted. A check of the site records at TARL revealed a prehistoric site recorded on Town Creek approximately 0.25 kilometers southeast of the project area. Topographic coverage of the project area is provided by the 7.5' Huntsville topographic quadrangle dated 1963 (photorevised 1976) (Figure 2). The project area is at the northern edge of the Huntsville quadrangle; therefore, the Pine Prairie quadrangle was also used, and it is incorporated into Figure 2.

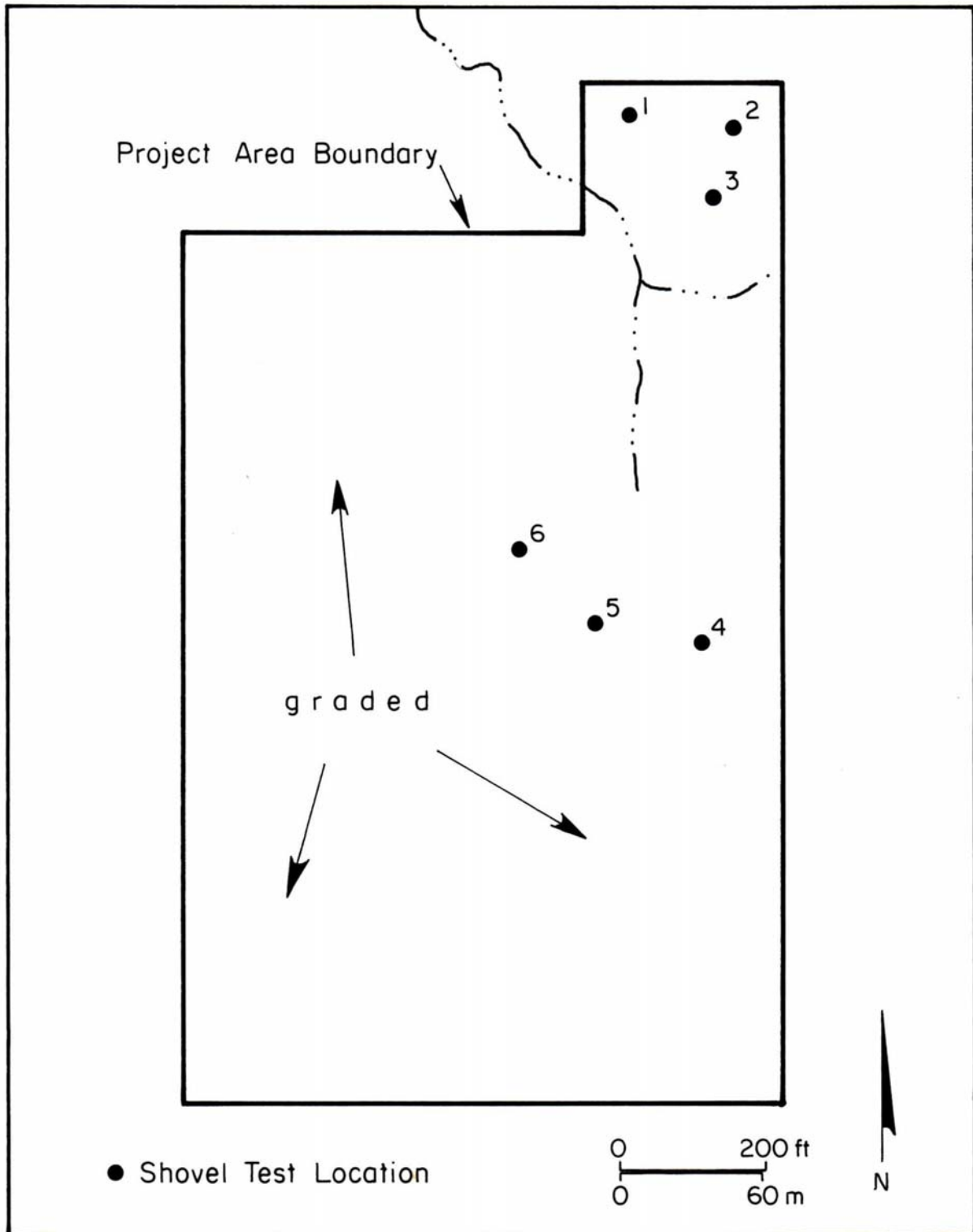


Figure 1. Project Area Map

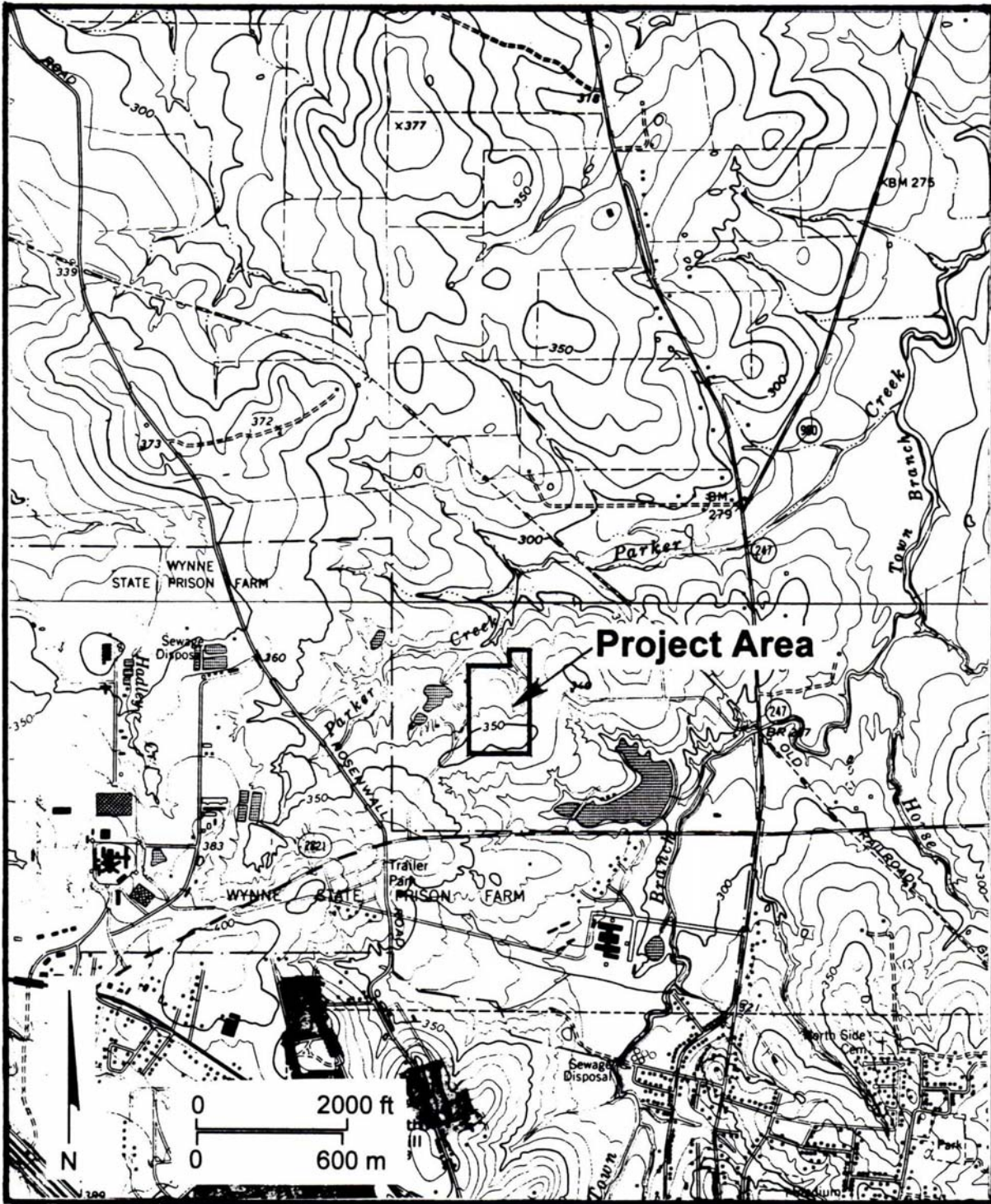


Figure 2. Project Area on Topographic Quadrangle Huntsville

FIELD METHODS

A check of the site records at TARL was made by Adrienne Mraz, Research Assistant, for BVRA. She identified one previously recorded prehistoric site (41WA123) approximately 0.25 km southeast of the current project area. This is a probable Archaic site that was recorded by William E. Moore in 1993 on personal time. The age of this site is based on the presence of dart points in the private collection of David Zellar, Huntsville resident. At the time of the visit, Mr. Moore observed flakes on the surface of a very disturbed landscape. The site was determined to have significant research potential.

Fieldwork was conducted on April 22, 2002 by William E. Moore (Principal Investigator), James E. Warren, and Christine Brennecke. The area examined consists of a 22 acre tract approximately 100 meters southeast of Parker Creek. It was immediately noted by the field survey crew that much of the 22 acre tract had been disturbed by heavy equipment. According to Gerald B. Harris, Jr., a grading contractor bulldozed the surface in 1994. He pushed the high spots into the low spots in order to level the area. A small area of approximately six acres in the northeast corner (Figure 1) was relatively undisturbed. This area is located on the slope of a sandy hill overlooking an unnamed tributary of Parker Creek.

The survey crew relied on the topographic quadrangles Huntsville and Pine Prairie and an engineering map provided by the client. It should be noted here that the contours as depicted on the topographic map have changed due to the extensive land alteration that was carried out in 1994. The engineering map was used to create the project area map (Figure 1), but the contours were omitted since they were not current as well.

The entire area was investigated by a 100% pedestrian survey with the survey crew examining the ground surface for evidence of cultural materials in the exposed, disturbed sandy mantle. The six acre tract in the northeast corner was shovel tested, and no cultural materials were observed. Three tests were dug in this area. Tests were 30 x 50 cm in size, and all soil was passed through 1/4 inch hardware cloth. The approximate location of each test is depicted on Figure 1, and more detailed shovel test information is found in Appendix I. Although this area was the most promising in terms of prehistoric site location, it was considered to be low probability because the nearest water source is a small tributary of Parker Creek. Also, there is enough disturbance that it is unlikely that cultural materials, if present, are intact. No additional shovel tests were deemed appropriate.

Another area south of the tributary on a slope appeared to be a likely area for site potential, and it was examined through shovel testing and probing. Three shovel tests revealed clay at the surface, and shovel testing was discontinued. Additional probes confirmed the presence of clay in the general area. Because of the presence of previous disturbance and distance to water, the southern and western parts of the project area were not shovel tested.

As part of a Phase I environmental assessment conducted by James E. Warren (2002) on this tract, tax and courthouse records were checked for the presence of previous structures. No evidence of any buildings was found, and Mr. Harris stated that he was not aware of any on the site in the past.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The project area had been greatly disturbed by heavy equipment. It was determined in the field that the six acre tract in the northeast part of the project area was the most likely area to contain intact cultural materials; however, shovel tests and examination of exposed areas did not produce evidence of a site, prehistoric or historic. A records check that included examination of tax and courthouse records indicated that the area had been used as pasture and woodlands with no previous structures present. According to the soil survey for Walker County (McClintock et al. 1979:Sheet 31), the soils in the project area consist mainly of Falba fine sandy loam, 1 to 5 percent slopes. This is a moderately deep soil found on convex uplands. The surface layer is a very friable, strongly acid, brown fine sandy loam about 5 inches thick. Between 7 and 24 inches is a very firm, very strongly acid, grayish-brown clay (McClintock et al. 1979:11). This soil is somewhat poorly drained and is saturated in winter and spring in most years. The soils encountered in shovel tests 1-3 contained very wet sandy soils in the upper strata. Although the color of the underlying clay in the first three shovel tests was different from that in the soil description, the wet soils suggest an area probably considered as a good location for a campsite by prehistoric groups.

A check of the site files and topographic maps at TARL revealed no previously recorded sites in the project area. This investigation covered a 22 acre tract. It is believed that the area most likely to contain archaeological sites is the sandy ridge to the north along Parker Creek. The 22 acre site is considered very low probability for the presence of archaeological sites.

RECOMMENDATIONS

No archaeological sites were found in the 22 acre project area. Therefore, it is recommended that construction be allowed to proceed as planned. It is always possible that evidence of archaeological sites is missed during any cultural resources survey. Should a prehistoric site be found during construction it is recommended that work cease until the situation can be evaluated by the Archeology Division, Texas Historical Commission.

REFERENCES CITED

- McClintock, William R., Jr., Joseph J. Castille, Michael Stewart, and L. E. Andrew
1979 *Soil Survey of Walker County, Texas*. United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service and Forest Service in cooperation with the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station.
- Warren, James E.
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APPENDIX I: SHOVEL TEST LOG

| Test | Depth | Description |
|------|-------|--|
| 01 | 60 cm | gray fine sandy loam at the surface and to a depth of 60 cm where yellow clay was encountered |
| 02 | 40 cm | gray fine sandy loam at the surface; at 10 cm loamy clay was encountered to a depth of 40 cm where a yellow clay was encountered |
| 03 | 20 cm | gray loamy clay at the surface to a depth of 10 cm where hard gray clay was encountered |
| 04 | 10 cm | tan clay at surface |
| 05 | 10 cm | gray clay at surface |
| 06 | 10 cm | gray clay at surface (sterile) |